



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

## Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors, All Regions  
Attn: Regional Fire Management Officers

From: Director, Office of Trust Responsibilities *Terrance L. Vial*

Subject: Work Capacity Tests, Medical Examination Requirements, Annual Refresher Training

### WORK CAPACITY TESTS

The safety of employees is our number one priority. Physical fitness plays an important role in improving fireline safety and effectiveness; unfit persons can quickly become a hazard to themselves as well as others. The Work Capacity Tests (Pack, Field and Walk Test) and physical examinations are the means used for fitness screening of employees who have wildland or prescribed fire jobs with a physical fitness requirement.

Fire Management Officers are responsible for ensuring that the Work Capacity Tests are administered annually to all employees who will be serving in wildland or prescribed fire positions requiring a fitness score. Managers may use the Work Capacity Tests to evaluate an employees level of physical fitness at any time during the field season. The tests must be administered and passed at the appropriate level prior to Red Card issue, and prior to assigning the employee to wildland or prescribed fire duty. Accurate documentation of the test results must be accomplished for all employees. This documentation must be retained until the next Work Capacity Test is administered. Test results must also be entered in Shared Application Computer System (SACS) to update the fitness score and fitness date that will appear on the Red Card. Physical fitness dates entered in SACS will reflect the date the employee passed the fitness test. Tests should be administered every calendar year, prior to the fire season.

The standards for the work capacity test ratings are as follows:

Arduous- 3 mile walk carrying 45 lbs in 45 minutes or less

Moderate- 2 mile walk carrying 25 lbs in 30 minutes or less

Light- 1 mile walk with no weight in 16 minutes or less

Fitness ratings for all job classifications can be found in the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide (310-1).

### **MEDICAL EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS**

The new interagency medical standards are not yet department or bureau policy. Until these standards have been approved, the Bureau of Indian Affairs will operate under the following guidance:

There are two circumstances that require an employee to receive a physical examination. First, a position description may require an employee to be qualified for a wildland or prescribed fire position at the arduous level. Secondly, regardless of an employee position description, if the employee participates in wildland fire or prescribed fire activities at the arduous level, he or she is required to complete a physical examination. The frequency of this examination requirement is as follows:

1. Employees 45 years of age and older, medical examination every 3 years.
2. Employees younger than 45 years of age, medical examination every 5 years.
3. Examinations will be administered prior to the work capacity test.
4. In non-examination years (see 1&2 above), the employee must receive a medical screening prior to work capacity test. The accepted BIA medical screening form is the PAR-Q, which can be found in the Work Capacity Test Administrator's Guide or on the BIA fire homepage.

Since the new medical standards are not yet policy, the medical examination form that is required is the SF-78. However, the new medical examination form (Baseline Form) can be used in place of the SF-78. This examination form exceeds the requirements of the SF-78. If the new medical standards become policy, all firefighters who have already received the new examination will not be required to take it again unless they are no longer current based on the age requirement.

Please note that these requirements apply only to arduous-level wildland fire and prescribed fire positions. They do not apply to those qualified only for moderate or low-level positions.

### **REFRESHER TRAINING**

Bureau of Indian Affairs policy requires all personnel participating in wildland or prescribed fire activities to attend annual safety refresher training. The recommended duration of the training is 8 hours. In addition to red-carded BIA and Tribal personnel, this includes all Emergency Fire Fighters (EFF) mobilized for local, regional or national use. Refresher training may be provided in-house or on an interagency basis, as generally determined by the local and/or regional wildland fire coordinating group. The refresher will include mandatory hands on fire shelter inspection and deployment practice. The balance of the

training should include pertinent local safety issues, as well as discussions on the following:

Your Fire Shelter 2001 Edition

Standard Fire Orders

Watchout Situations

LCES

Common Denominators of Fire Behavior on Tragedy and Near-Miss Forest Fires

Standards for Survival/Firefighter Survival

Reviews of recent entrapments, near-entrapments, and shelter deployments.

Health hazards of smoke, and mitigation measures.

Current regional and national drought, fire weather and behavior situations and lookouts.

Findings from any recent fire safety research efforts.

Reviews of previous years SAFENETS.

If you have any questions, please call John Gould, BIA Fire and Aviation Safety Specialist, at 208-387-5177.